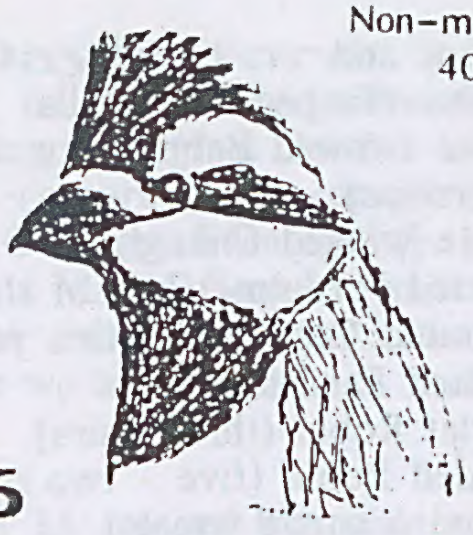
Non-members
40¢

Castlemaine Naturalist



August '97
Vol.21.7 #236

A Quail or Two at the Red, White and Blue!

Early in July, on a perfect, sunny day, I took the opportunity to explore the Muckleford forest, starting at the Red, White and Blue mine. Some of the forest which has been recently burned now has tall Spear Grass seed heads and regenerating native shrubs, and the most interesting birds were found in these areas. A Spotted Quail-thrush led me up a hill near the mine, offering a couple of reasonable views before disappearing, and later, on my big circuit through the forest two Painted Button-quails were found in another burnt patch. One strutted through its domain, sometimes in full sunshine, resembling a brilliant, walking, painted egg.

One of my favourite birds is the Hooded Robin, so I was pleased to see five of these during my visit. I have seen records of these at the Red, White and Blue in this Newsletter so I knew there was a chance to see a few, but five was great!

Very little was in flower, but one eucalypt was in full bloom, its flowers jealously guarded by a small unit of Red Wattlebirds. It was a strange tree. I believe it to be a hybrid. The buds and fruits are like that of a Yellow Gum, but the bark was grey and fibrous like a stringybark. The tree is about 100 m south of the Dunns Reef turnoff on the Red, White and Blue track, and it is about 30m east of the track.

I recorded 41 species of birds for the day:

Red Wattlebird
Yellow-tufted (most numerous by far),
White-naped,
Yellow-faced (often single birds with lots of other small birds),
Brown-headed,
White-eared and
Black-chinned(heard) Honeyeaters
Eastern Spinebill
Weebill
Buff-rumped (common),
Striated,
Brown,

Yellow and
Yellow-rumped Thornbills
White-browed Babbler (two groups)
White-winged Chough
Spotted Pardalote (lots of these around Castlemaine this year!)
Striated Pardalote
Scarlet Robin (three pairs)
Hooded Robin (five - two pairs and a single female)
White-throated Treecreeper
Brown Treecreeper
Varied Sitella
Superb Blue Wren
Eastern Rosella
Crimson Rosella
Galah
Golden Whistler
Grey Shrike-thrush (hostilities are under way for territories between these guys!)
Willie Wagtail
Restless Flycatcher
Painted Button-quail (two)
Silvereye
Crested Shrike-tit (found me rather than the other way around!)
Spotted Quail-thrush (one)
Welcome Swallow
Grey Currawong
Magpie
Little Raven
Australian Raven
Wedgetailed Eagle (soaring overhead)

Simon Kennedy

Birds, 61 Hunter St, June/July

In recent weeks the Narrow-leafed Peppermint on our block has been covered with fragrant creamy blossom, and has attracted rosellas, Silvereyes, Red Wattlebirds, New Holland Honeyeaters, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Spinebills. The Eastern and Crimson Rosellas have also competed with Blackbirds and Silvereyes for the abundance of berries on the Cratoegus. The Crimson Rosellas are noisily checking out the nesting box in the pepper tree as well.

Some late visitors appeared in early June - a group of Tasmanian Silvereyes which usually arrive during April. They departed hastily after a couple of days of feeding and splashing in the bath.

A family of Goldfinches has also been to the bird bath lately, seemingly not discouraged by the fact that it was frozen until midday.

A welcome pair of Kookaburras are spending their time between the garden at 'Buda" and the Kalimna bush behind us, and in the same area a flock of noisy Pied Currawongs have been present for several weeks. Rose-breasted Galahs and occasional Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are foraging nearby with plenty of sound effects, but our residential Magpie has been rather subdued - by the extremely cold conditions, I suppose.

Shirley Parnaby

Winter Walk in Daylesford

The weather was kind for our outing to Daylesford. The frosty start to the day meant a lovely sunny morning, though it clouded over in the afternoon. Ern had prepared a very comprehensive double-sided sheet with explanations and descriptions of Geology, Eucalypts (I think I can now confidently tell a Candlebark from a Manna Gum), Wattles and some of the more interesting plants of the area. He even included a map, so we didn't get lost - or rather, so we knew where to look for some of the more unusual plants.

We set off from twin Bridges at ¼ to 11, where Ern pointed out that, being a higher rainfall area, the Candlebarks and Manna Gums were the dominant Eucalypts, and Blackwoods along the creek. Both Peppermints grew along the track, the Narrow-leafed in the wetter areas and the Broad-leafed as we travelled down the track into the dryer area. Another interesting Eucalypt was the Scent-bark, but why it is called that I'm not sure, because, despite the many noses employed in the exercise, no one could detect any scent. About half way between Tipperary Springs and Bryces Flat we came across the Mealy Bundy which, Ern explained, is a tree of the drier areas. So in only 6km there are 3 distinct habitats, from wet sclerophyl to dry.

Although I have walked along that path several times I had never spotted some of the really interesting plants, such as Hovea pannosa, and Mountain Leafless Pea. The really dainty Matted Bossea I was familiar with. I was also quite familiar with Podolobium procumbens, but not its new name! Oxylobium I knew, Podolobium I'll have to get used to. None of these plants were in flower of course, but we found the green form of Correa reflexa in flower on the northern part of the walk, especially on the eastern side of the creek.

There were far fewer birds than I expected to see, but then, I have usually gone in late spring to the area, and perhaps they are not usually very abundant in winter. I missed the Grey Fantails, which have been very common on other visits. The Blue Wrens and White-browed Scrub Wrens were still around, as well as Brown and Striated Thornbills, lots of Yellow Robins, Brown and White-throated Treecreepers, and Lesley spotted a Red-browed Treecreeper. We looked hopefully for the Powerful Owl, but it doesn't seem to have come back.

Although we walked a total of about 12 km we took lots of time and didn't get back to the cars until about 4 o'clock, so it wasn't arduous, though one gully on the east side had us puffing! but it was all worth it; a very pleasant and informative day.

Thanks Ern.

The bird list for the day was -

Grey Shrike-thrush
White-browed Scrub-wren
Superb Blue Wren
White-naped Honeyeater
Eastern Spinebill
White-eared Honeyeater
Yellow Robin
Striated Thornbill
Brown Thornbill
Brown Treecreeper
White-throated Treecreeper
Redbrowed Treecreeper
Crimson Rosella
Crested Shrike-tit
Kookaburra
Little Raven
Crey Currawong
Pied Currawong

Rita Mills

Lunch on the Lachlan

On our recent trip to New South Wales Maureen and I stopped off for a barbecue lunch on the banks of the fascinating Lachlan River, flowing gently south-west toward its meeting with the Murrumbidgee at Mungery

Our attention was focussed on a Restless Flycatcher flitting about in lightly timbered river flats about 80 metres away when, from the tops of the River Redgums, appeared two raptors - a Whistling Kite and a Fork-tailed, or Black, Kite. Both seemed intent on making a meal of the poor little Restless Flycatcher!

The Whistling Kite was the main aggressor as R.F. scuttled to the cover of a nearby Peppercorn tree. He made several attempts to try and penetrate the foliage but R.F. was too nimble.

Meanwhile the Fork-tailed Kite had alighted on a nearby post (about 30 metres away) keeping a very watchful eye on proceedings.

Many other birds were disturbed as the fracas took place, including White-plumed Honeyeaters, a Mistletoe bird, a pair of Pied Butcherbirds and a flock of Red-rumped Parrots.

However, there is a happy ending to the tale as both raptors flew off empty handed (taloned?) and little R.F. was later seen frolicking merrily in the understory.

Ken and Maureen Dredge

P.S. We saw a total of 80 species in the Hay area, and 92 species for the trip. The highlights were: a Striped Honeyeater, 2 Bluefaced Honeyeaters, a flock of 12 Bluebonnets, a flock of approximately 30 Zebra Finches, 6 Banded Plovers, a Flame Robin (on the edge of its range) and the local Red-capped Robins.

Observations

* Ern Perkins reported a flock of 96 magpies in a paddock at Murphys Creek near Tarnagulla, with another flock of 20 just a bit further on.
* A flock of at least 200 Little Ravens were seen at Little Hampton. Stan Bruton.
* Elaine Kinnear and John Lavery reported a flock of 13 or 14 White-winged Choughs in Specimen Gully Road. They are becoming more and more familiar with their featherd neighbours including a White-faced Heron, Red-browed Firetails, and Crested Pigeons.
* There is a huge number of Spotted Pardalotes in the district now.
* Marg Hunter was able to report that their first Flame Robin for the season arrived the week before the general meeting.
* Several people reported wattles coming out - Golden, Cootamundra (first sprig reported in the middle of June) and Mount Morgan.
* Toward the end of the month the Early Black Wattles beside the highway at Harcourt were beginning to flower. Rita Mills
* One of the Southern Boobooks seems to have settled down in the usual roosting place at the Botanic Gardens after several weeks of temporary visits. No doubt the other will appear in due course as the breeding season approaches. Shirley Parnaby.
* Later in the month Ern Perkins counted 106 Magpies, in a paddock at Thornton near Eildon this time, and again there were smaller flocks nearby.
* Anchor Plant, which is now rare because it is a plant of the basalt plains, which is good grazing country, has now been recorded along Joyces Creek. This is the third speciman recorded near Castlemaine. Ern Perkins.
* Barbara Maund has lots of Silvereyes in her garden. They were at first attracted by the Cotoneaster, and have liked what they found in the garden and have visited often.
* At her friend's place in Specimen Gully Road, Barkers Creek, Brenda Envall has also seen lots of Silvereyes, and also Yellow Robins, Spine-Bills and treecreepers.
* Chris Morris spotted a Collared Sparrowhawk in his garden with a mouse in its talons. His concern was that he had put Ratsack out some months ago. What effect has catching rats and mice that have taken bait on the raptors?
* Kay Turner has had a Spinebill feeding in her white Japonica.
* Grey Currawongs have been seen in Kaweka, and also Silvereyes and Golden Whistlers. Pied Currawongs seem to have moved further into the town. Ern Perkins.
* A pair of Goshawks were seen between Newstead and Joyces Creek. Rita Mills.
* Maureen and Ken Dredge have at last seen Margaret Badminton's Rose Robin. On the way to Margaret's they went via Donkey Gully Road, and saw at at least 100 Striated Pardalotes in one flock.

* At Moyston Sue Kennedy heard what sounded like a cockatoo, but none could be seen. Then she spotted the real caller - a Magpie, which completed another Cockie call and then went into a normal Magpie call. Rita Mills

* Lorraine Rye reported seeing a white phase of the Grey Goshawk on the side of the road near Cobden. They at first took it to be a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo but when it flew it was obvious it wasn't.

From the Business Meeting

Fungimap

"'Fungimap' is the Australian Fungi Mapping Scheme which aims to undertake the first detailed mapping of the distribution and spread of certain species of fungi in Australia. Since very little information has been published on Australian fungi, the records collected will form the base-line data for Australian fungi. From this, it will be possible to gather basic distribution data to publish as maps, to look at the factors that determine distribution, and the effects of, for example, land degradation on the conservation of fungi.

"To date there are 50 target species for which we need records....."

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED to record the 50 'target' fungi. All correspondence and records should be forwarded to

FUNGIMAP
National Herbarium of Victoria,
Birdwood Avenue,
South Yarra. 3141

The basic information required is -

1. Species name,
2. Locality - state, location and grid reference,
3. Habitat - in soil, on wood, on dung, in grass, on track, in tree (dead/alive) etc.
4. Date seen - historic records only need the month and year, or even just the year.
5. Other information - nearest tree species, surrounding vegetation, altitude and such.

Photographs or drawings (NO specimens!) with descriptions are also needed to help in identification. Photographs can be returned if you wish or will be held as a record.

48 of the target species are illustrated in Bruce Fuhrers's book *A Field Companion to Australian Fungi*. If you do not have it already the book can be purchased for $19-95 plus $4-50 postage. A colour sheet of the 8 preliminary target species is available for $5-00 inc. postage.

Both the above items can be obtained from FUNGIMAP at the above address, and all cheques should be crossed and made payable to FNCV. Our club has the list of target species, with a note of the page they appear on the *Field Companion*, which can be photocopied. When you send in your record you will automatically be included in the mailing list for the FUNGIMAP newsletter. If you would like to recieve a newsletter anyway please contact the above address

FUNGIMAP is building up good records for the Melbourne and Metropolitan areas and the Alps, but are desperately in need of information from other areas.

Further information can be obtained from the National Herbarium of Victoria at the above address,
or on the FUNGIMAP Home page: http://calcite.apana.org.au/fungimap

Birds of Australia (RAOU) Congress and Campout
Subject - Birds and Woodlands.
Congress: Sat 4 Sun 5 Oct at Nowik theatre, Charles Sturt University in Albury.
Campout 5 - 11 Oct at Chiltern, based at the Cornishtown Hall.
Costs, times, subjects, activities and application form are all in the pamphlet available at the August FNC general meeting.

Great Dividing Trail Walks
Sunday 17 Aug, Upper Lerderderg, duration 2-3 hours. Meet at the Garden of St Erth in Blackwood at 9.30 am. Leader is Pat Kelso. Loop walk.
Saturday 6 Sept, Middle Lerderderg, duration 4-7 hours, meet at O'Briens Crossing, Blackwood. Leader is Merv Kew. Car Shuffle.
For further details contact Ed Butler 0353 482367 (BH),
or Pat Conroy 0353 482825 (AH)

BOCA outing to the Maryborough area, Sept 6
Leader - Gary Cheers.
This is one of the Bird Observers Spring Coach tours, and the nearby country Field Nats are always welcome to join them on their outings.
" Come and see part of the Forgotten Forest. The Maryborough area is rich in bird species with over 250 species recorded within 30km of the town. Typical box-ironbark species include Swift Parrot, Crested Bellbird, Black-chinned Honeyeater and, if you're lucky, Painted Honeyeater. The box-ironbark is also rich in flora with many species of plants to be seen locally. You will also have the chance to see what has happened to this ecosystem since white settlement and why many of the bird species are declining." Gary Cheers as leader is a bonus!
For details of time and place Ph. Rita M. on 5472 4553 after 27/8/97.

C . F . N . C . PROGRAMME

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.

General Meetings are held in the Uniting Church Hall. The entrance to car park is behind the Art Gallery, Lyttleton Street.

Sat Aug 2 **Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Survey.** All day outing. Leave 27 Doveton St at 10 am. Take Lunch, etc. Lunch will be at the Red, White and Blue mine if anyone wishes to join the survey for the afternoon. Don't forget your binocs!

There is also the possibility of further survey farther afield on Sunday 3. This will be decided and arranged at the Saturday excursion

Fri Aug 8 **Pine Forest Management,** Warwick Williams. UCA hall 8pm

Sat Aug 9 **Moonlight Flat Pine Plantation.** Leader R. Mills. Leave CHIRP, 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30pm.

Fri Sept 12 **Film "Microcosmos"** A day in the life of an insect in a field in France. 10.30 am at Golden Square Elderly Cits. clubrooms. next to the G.S. Fire Station. B'go FNC and B'go U3A are showing the film.

Fri Sept 12 The meeting will be joining **Bendigo** SGAP to hear **Leon Costermans,** author of a number of books on trees and shrubs. **Leave from 27 Doveton st at 7.15.**

Sat Sept 13 **Exploring Mt Franklin area.** Leave 13 Mostyn St at 1.30pm. Leader is M.Dredge.

Thurs Sept 18 First of the Spring walks in areas of local bush. Leader is R.Mills.Leave 27 Doveton St. at 4pm. Outing of 1–1½ hrs duration.

Thurs Sept 25 Spring walk. Leader. M. Dredge. Arrangements as above.

Thurs Oct 2. Spring walk. Leader J.Turnbull. Arrangements as above.

Fri Oct 10 **Plants of the Ballarat District,** Pat and Bill Murphy, Ballarat F.N.C. 8pm, UCA hall.

Sun Oct 12 **Mt Beckwith.** All day excursion. Leaders Pat and Bill Murphy of Ballarat FNC. Meet at Clunes P.O. at 11am. Take lunch, etc.

Wed Oct 15 **Working Bee. Cape Broom Pull.** Meet at 9 am at the corner of Mary St. and Froomes Rd. Bring thick protective gloves.

Fri Nov 14 **"In the steps of Baron Von Mueller** – The North Australian Exploring Expedition", Marco Duretto, speaker. UCA hall. 8pm.

Fri Dec 12. **Members and visitors night.** Start thinking about what you might be able to contribute to the program for our last meeting for the year.

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Meetings:–

General – Second Friday every month (except Jan) at **Uniting Church hall, Mostyn St.** at 8.00pm.

Business – Held on the 4th Thursday every month (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell Street at 7.30pm. **All Members are invited to attend.**

Subscriptions 1997 – Ordinary Membership: Single $16 Family $24
Pensioner/Student: Single $12 Family $18. Supporting $25
Newsletter posted: Membership + $6

Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club Inc.
P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.